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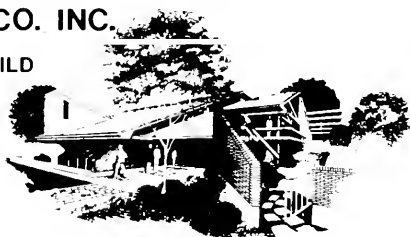
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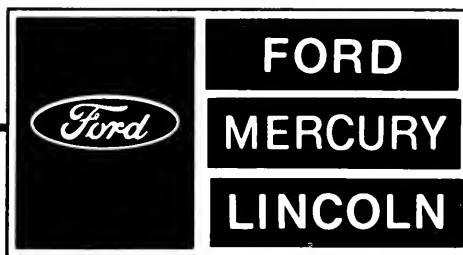
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# Delta Scene

Winter 1984 • Volume 11, No. 4



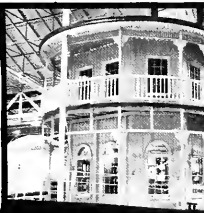
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**Cover Photo:** "Old Man and The Mule" was drawn by Dr. Ed Williams. His idea came from an old newspaper photo. Dr. Williams received his undergraduate degree in Wildlife Conservation and Management from Louisiana Tech., and his Masters and PhD in Wildlife and Fisheries from Texas A&M. Dr. Williams teaches zoology at Delta State.

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# WINTER EVENTS

## JANUARY

### January 1

Handmade Quilts Exhibited by Esther Lishman, Robinson-Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

### January 1-13

**Printmaking: The Four Processes, from the MMA Collections**, upper Atrium, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS.

### January 11

Mississippi Soybean Day, Civic Center, Greenville, MS.

### January 13 - February 8

Ellsworth and William Woodward:

Watercolors, drawings, and etchings (a touring exhibition from the Southern Arts Federation), Fielding L. Wright Art Center, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### January 19 - February 3

Scholastic Art Awards Exhibition, West Gallery, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS.

### January 20 - March 31

Chinese Papercuts, upper Atrium, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS.

### January 20

The Singhs' Photography Show, Cottonlandia Museum, Greenwood, MS.

### January 22

Mantovani Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### January 24

Neil Ramsey, Guest Artist (Saxophone), 8:00 p.m., Delta Room, Ewing Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### January 25 and 26

Health Fair, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

### January 28

The Mastrogiacomo-Duo Pianist; Steven Saxon - Bass Baritone, Joint Concert, sponsored by Greenwood Concert Association, 8:00 p.m., Civic Center, Greenwood, MS, membership only.

### January 31

Western Brass Quintet, Guest Artist, 8:00 p.m., Delta Room, Ewing Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### Late January

Greenwood-Leflore County Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting, guest speaker, Civic Center. For more information call 453-4152, Greenwood, MS.



## FEBRUARY

### February 1

Black Artist exhibit in honor of Black History Month, Robinson-Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

### Early February

"A Thurber Carnival," Dinner Theater production of Greenwood Little Theater, membership only, for more information call 658-4463 or 453-3202, Greenwood, MS.

### February 2-9

Mardi Gras in Jackson, children's parade, February 2, Metro Center, downtown parade with 100 to 120 units on February 4, complete with dubloons, and February 9, a grand ball will be held for the 500 Krewe members and honored guests.

### February 3

Vicksburg Community Concert Association presents Souvenirs of the Opera, 2:30 p.m., City Auditorium, Vicksburg, MS.

### February 5

Faculty Chamber Music Concert, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 7

Keith Pettway and Kerry Arlt, Faculty Recital (Flute and Guitar), 8:00 p.m., Delta Room, Ewing Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 9

Annual Heart Association Fund Raising Benefit, Vicksburg, MS.

### February 11

Carole Jeanne Robison, Faculty Recital (Vocal), 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 18 - March 27

Jane Rule Burdine: Photographs, O.B. Clark: Ceramics, Afro-American Quilters: Organized and circulated by Maude Wahlman, Art Department, University of Mississippi, Fielding L. Wright Art Center, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 19

Big Band Cavalcade, sponsored by Greenwood Concert Association, 8:00 p.m., Civic Center, membership only, Greenwood, MS.

Chicago Brass Workshop, 7:00 p.m., Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 20

Chicago Brass Concert, 7:30 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 21

David Tannenbaum, Guest Artist (Guitar), 8:00 p.m., Delta Room, Ewing Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 23

Tax Assistance Day, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

### February 26

Douglas Wheeler, Faculty Percussion Recital, 8:00 p.m., Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### February 28

Marimba Ensemble, 8:00 p.m., Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.



## MARCH

### March 1

Youth Art Exhibit by Bayou Academy Art Students, Robinson-Carpenter Memorial Library, Cleveland, MS.

### March 2 and 3

Henderson & Baird Hardware Show, open to dealers, Civic Center, Greenwood, MS.

### March 3

DSU Band "Pops" Concert, 3:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 4

Jane Curran, Faculty Piano Recital, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 5

Renaissance Spaghetti Supper, 4:30 p.m., Green Onion Room, Union Building, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 6-9

Boat, Sport & Recreation Show, Greenville Mall, Greenville MS.

### March 7

Britton Theurer, Faculty Trumpet Recital, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 7-9

"Hedda Gabler," sponsored by Greenwood Little Theater, directed by Marla Cowie. Membership only, for more information call 658-4463 or 453-3202, Greenwood, MS.

### March 9

Genealogy Seminar, sponsored by Greenwood-Lefflore Public Library Civic Center, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., for more information call Mrs. Neal VanDyke 453-3634, Greenwood, MS.

### March 9-31

Spring Pilgrimage, Tours of homes, 1105 Washington St., Vicksburg, MS, 638-6514.

### March 13

Elbony Fashion Show, Civic Center, Greenwood, MS

### March 15 and 16

Arts & Crafts show and sale, Greenville Mall, Greenville, MS.

### March 17

Carlyle Urello paintings on display, Cottonlandia Museum, Greenwood, MS.

### March 17-23

Mississippi Recreation Vehicle Camp-In, Civic Center, Greenwood, MS.

### March 21

Michele Zukovsky, Guest Artist (Clarinet), 8:00 p.m., Zeigel Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 26

Opera Workshop, 8:00 p.m., Broom Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.

### March 30

Cotton Ball, sponsored by Junior Auxiliary, Civic Center, for more information call 453-3563, Greenwood, MS

### March 31 - May 3

Faculty Art Show, Opening Reception: Sunday, March 31, Fielding L. Wright Art Center, Delta State University, Cleveland, MS.



## APRIL

### April 6

World Catfish Festival, Springtime celebration, catfish eating contest, 10 km run, entertainment and tours of fish ponds, selection of Catfish Queen, 247-2616, Belzoni, MS.

### April 7 - May 12

Faces: Selections from the Hallmark Photographic Collection, upper Atrium, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS.

### April 14 - May 26

Southeastern Watercolor Society Exhibition, West Gallery, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS

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**Editor**  
Curt Lamar

**Business Manager**  
Sherry Van Liew

**Contributors**  
Marion Barnwell  
Phyllis Frazier Boatman  
Van Henderson  
Rebecca Hood-Adams  
Leroy Morganti  
Janice Randall

**Art Direction**  
Delta Design Group

**Production Artist**  
Thomas Hamilton

**Photography**  
Claiborne Barnwell  
Chris Ryan

**Illustrations**  
Rodney Dempsey  
Theresa Russell  
Brad Woodcock

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**Editorial Board**  
William LaForge, Chairman  
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**Advertising Sales Office**  
Main Office, P.O. Box B-3  
Delta State University  
Cleveland, MS 38733  
(601) 846-1976

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# Deb of the Year

by Phyllis Frazier Boatman

It was always hard for me to comprehend just how wealthy Lisa Darnell really was. Looking at someone who, at the age of eighteen, already had enough money in trust to insure the financial security of her grandchildren while I had to struggle for next week's lunch money was something that my feeble mind was just unable to comprehend.

You must realize, however, that there was a time when Lisa's financial status was the least of my concerns. Until Lisa turned twelve we were next-door neighbors (she was four months older than me, and never let me forget it), and-at that time it took a lot more than money to catch my pre-adolescent fancy. Everyone knew the Darnells had money; they owned half the land in the county and it had been under the Darnell name for five generations, so theirs was truly "old money" and all the social connotations that it implied. However, Lisa's grandfather was of the mind that his sons weren't going to see a penny of their share of the family money until he'd been in his

grave at least a good thirty years, so until the time he saw fit to depart the living, the Darnells were relegated to middle classhood.

Back then, the only time I really sat up and took notice of what Lisa had that I didn't was at the beginning of school and at Christmas. Every September without fail, Lisa would receive a brand new set of school supplies, regardless of the fact that she'd barely worn down the point of her pencils from last year. This caused me a great deal of consternation, my own mother being the thrifty sort who insisted that slightly used pencils and a half-empty bottle of glue from last year would serve me just fine. The one item that was the object of my supreme envy, however, was the brand-new box of sixty-four Crayola crayons (the kind with the built-in pencil sharpener in the box) that she received every year. I lusted after that box with a vengeance and begged and cajoled for my own to no avail, all the while feeling certain that surely I was the most mistreated child in school for having to make do with such inferior supplies. (Lack of crayons



Illustration by Brad Woodcock

did not, to my dismay, seem to hamper my learning ability and gave me one less argument for equal treatment.)

And Christmas! Christmas at the Darnell's looked like the toy showroom at Neiman-Marcus. The newest dolls on the market were always waiting for Lisa — the ones that walked, talked, grew hair, and brushed their teeth. I always got the dolls that just sat and smiled. (Actually, I preferred these soft, silent playmates to the mechanical wonders that Lisa received. But when it came time for show and tell at school, no one wanted to look at a doll that just sat and smiled, so Lisa inevitably got all the attention.) She was the first in our class to get an Easy Bake oven one Christmas, which was the ultimate status symbol in the eyes of all of us envious third-graders. In short, if it was new and expensive, Lisa would probably get it.

Things changed radically the summer before we entered seventh grade. Lisa's grandfather died long before he'd planned to do so (he counted on having a good 120 years in him, at least), and his eldest son

— Lisa's father — received the largest share of the land and the profits therefrom. He also acquired the huge, Tara-like mansion on the outskirts of town when Lisa's grandmother decided to forsake easy, small town living and move to where the action was in Memphis. Immediately the Darnells went from being just plain old folks with money to the absolute personification of wealth, social position, and high, high class. Lisa continued to go to public school, her father being under the impression that she would get a more well-rounded education "mingling with the masses," but her attitude began a slight shift toward the other end of the social spectrum until by the time she entered high school she was hanging out with the other sleek, pampered offspring of the town's elite. Even among her own little clique she easily outclassed everyone, for she was the only girl who at the age of sixteen could afford to buy her everyday clothes at Helen of Memphis and fly to Dallas with her mother to shop for special occasion wear.

After graduation she went to SMU and I went to the local college which, like elementary school, junior high, and high school, was within three blocks of my house. She flew home for the holidays but was so busy with parties and other social events that one rarely saw her in town. Her name was frequently in the society section of the Commercial Appeal, first as a debutante at the annual Delta Debutantes ball, then later as a lady of the something-or-other during Cotton Carnival time in Memphis. After graduating from college with some obscure and totally useless degree, she moved to Memphis and began work at some public relations job for the city that consisted mainly of smiling a lot and collecting a fat paycheck. I tried to find a job with my equally as useless sociology degree (I was extremely liberal, but hopelessly unemployable), and finally found a job in town as a receptionist in order to wait out my newly-announced fiancé's last year in school. Soon after our official engagement (I stubbornly refused to set a date until I got a ring), Lisa surprised no one by announcing her own engagement.

The groom-to-be was, of course, from a family equal in wealth to the Darnells and was a properly respectable attorney in his father's law firm. Together, Lisa and Martin were dazzling. Their engagement was one endless round of parties, worked around trips to New York to have her wedding gown fitted (it was rumored to cost \$6,000, not counting the \$300 little white lace shoes she just couldn't resist) and other such tedious pre-wedding chores. Fourteen of her closest and dearest friends had been picked to be bridesmaids and would have their designer dresses flown in from New York as well. The Peabody was booked for the reception, and with flowers, food and orchestra costing a cool \$50,000, it would easily be the biggest bash the old hotel had seen in a long time. Even among the upper-upper class, this was definitely going to be an Event, something to which an invitation would be highly prized and jealously guarded.

*Continued on page 22*



# Plum Point "Primitive"

by Janice Randall

At 61, Alice Moseley became a big-time gambler. She gave up a successful teaching career to try her luck as a folk artist. Within ten years Alice had made a name for herself among primitive-style painters of the Mid-South. Then suddenly, at 71, she found herself at Memphis's Methodist Hospital awaiting an intraocular lens implant. Her eyesight was failing. It was not the first setback Alice Moseley had ever faced, but like so many disappointments in her life, this cloud was silver-lined. By pure coincidence her surgeon was ophthalmologist Dr. Jerre Freeman, one of her former students. About to go "under the knife" Mrs. Moseley glanced up at him mischievously and quipped, "I'm sure glad I never gave you an 'F'!" She had no need to worry. Dr. Freeman performed the cataract operation as skillfully as he had once composed essays in Alice's English class. "Grandma Moseley" returned to her easel with better-than-ever eyesight and

renewed zeal.

Alice Moseley's latest coup was winning "Best of Show" at Shreveport, Louisiana's "Red River Revel" arts festival. Her rendition of **The Children's Hour** beat out one hundred competitors and was snatched up for the host-city's permanent collection. Another of Alice's vibrantly colored acrylic paintings captured first place at the Batesville (Mississippi) Art Show. Competition judge Dr. Malcolm Norwood says he had no trouble arriving at his decision. "Alice Moseley is a fantastic primitive-type artist whose work has genuine appeal. It's fresh and very exciting." Dr. Norwood, head of the art department at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, adds that **Looking Through a Window into Batesville's Past** "stood head and shoulders above the work of those who had studied art." In fact, art professors repeatedly advise Alice against formal training. She has a winning style of her own.

Alice Moseley's current success, like all her accomplishments in life, did not come easily. "I have advanced so far in the twelve years because of determination," Alice explains. "The secret is not to let things get you down." Mrs. Moseley has proved her resilience time and again. The stock market crash of 1929 put an end to her family's security. Financial strain not only forced Alice to leave college, but was also the catalyst of her father's depression and subsequent suicide. For the next seven years Alice coped with the tedium of work in a small grocery store. When she married at 25, anxious relatives breathed sighs of relief. In those days, a woman still single at the quarter-century point was considered "on the edge of spinsterhood." But for Alice, a self-proclaimed "professional late bloomer," marriage was just the beginning.

Ten years of teaching, several published stories, and a master's degree earned at 56 highlight her academic career. Out of the classroom, a fascination with color drew Alice to decorating and flower arranging. But it took a personal tragedy to get her artistic career off the ground. She took up painting to keep from dwelling on her mother's death.

Today Alice Moseley has no time for self-pity. Her schedule includes several one-artist shows as well as a television interview. Business is booming at Alice's Plum Point, Mississippi gallery, she is recognized as far away as Denver, and she expects increasingly brisk sales.

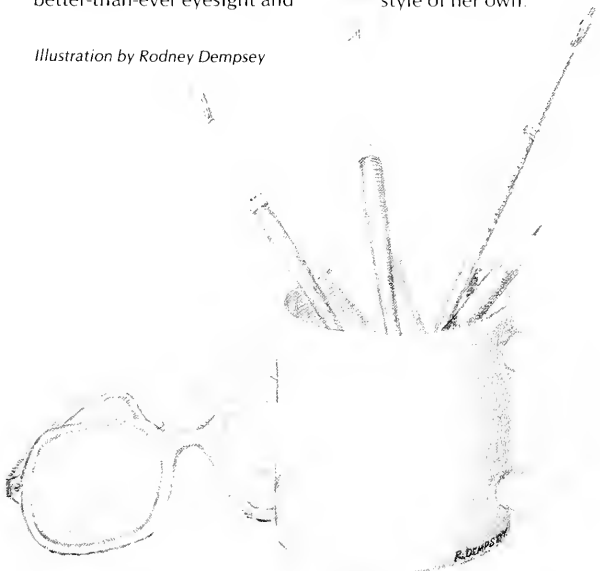
Early in her career Alice wasn't sure if the public could relate to her art. At her first show, the 61-year old artist mingled incognito with the crowd, hoping to overhear encouraging comments. Two teenaged boys were eyeing her painting **Bourbon Street Musicians**. "You can tell a real cool cat did this one," she heard one boy say, and since that moment Alice Moseley has never regretted her decision to paint.

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Janice Randall received her B.A. in French from Amherst College and a M.A. in French from Columbia University. Presently from Boston, Mass., she is the editor of *Entertainment Plus Magazine* in Boston.

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Illustration by Rodney Dempsey



# Recollections of Rosedale

## the town that is different.

by Leroy Morganti

Thomas Wolfe concluded that “you can’t go home again,” and I suppose he was right since his words have been accepted as conventional wisdom with the passage of time. But Wolfe didn’t grow up in Rosedale, Mississippi, a place where I return often in spirit and memory as well as in person. Wolfe, of course, was referring to the inevitable changes that people and places undergo, changes that disappoint the native son returning after a long absence and expecting to find things exactly as he left them. Rosedale has changed in many regards in the more than 20 years that have slipped by since I last resided there. It’s no longer my home, but it will always be my hometown, my roots firmly secured there by countless memories of good times spent with good friends.

On the surface, there was little to distinguish the Rosedale of my youth from countless other small towns that flourished as trade centers for the heavily agricultural Delta economy of a quarter century ago. Indeed, Rosedale’s uniqueness lay not so much in the town as in the people themselves, a distinction that was noted by a magazine writer in the late 1950s. “I can’t put my finger on it,” he observed, “but Rosedale is different. . . having a way of its own, and enjoying every minute of it.” Without realizing it, the writer had discerned the difference, the ability of the townspeople to laugh at themselves and not take life too seriously, either in good times or bad. Perhaps

such an attitude was a necessity for a town that depended on a fickle King Cotton for most of its livelihood. Like the Mississippi River it bordered, the fortunes of Rosedale could rise and fall with swiftness and uncertainty. We were inescapably the economic captives of the weather and the boll weevil, and we grew up cussin’ both. An Alfred E. Neuman type of “What, Me Worry?” attitude was a handy thing to have in such an environment, and Rosedalian practiced it to perfection.

What follows is not intended to be history of Rosedale; it simply represents one youngster’s random recollections of a secure childhood in a town where everyone not only knew everyone else and their business, but seemed to care as well. Like the town itself, this article is intentionally light-hearted in tone, totally ignoring hard times and tragedies even though we had our share of both. Time may have diminished the accuracy of some of my memories, but certainly not the fondness with which they are recalled. For that reason alone, I’m sure my fellow Rosedalian will once again forgive my shortcomings.

On at least two occasions each year, the Rosedale of my youth would become the social center of the Delta, welcoming hundreds of people from throughout the area. In the winter, it was the Christmas dance at the courthouse where removable seats had been installed in the courtroom just to

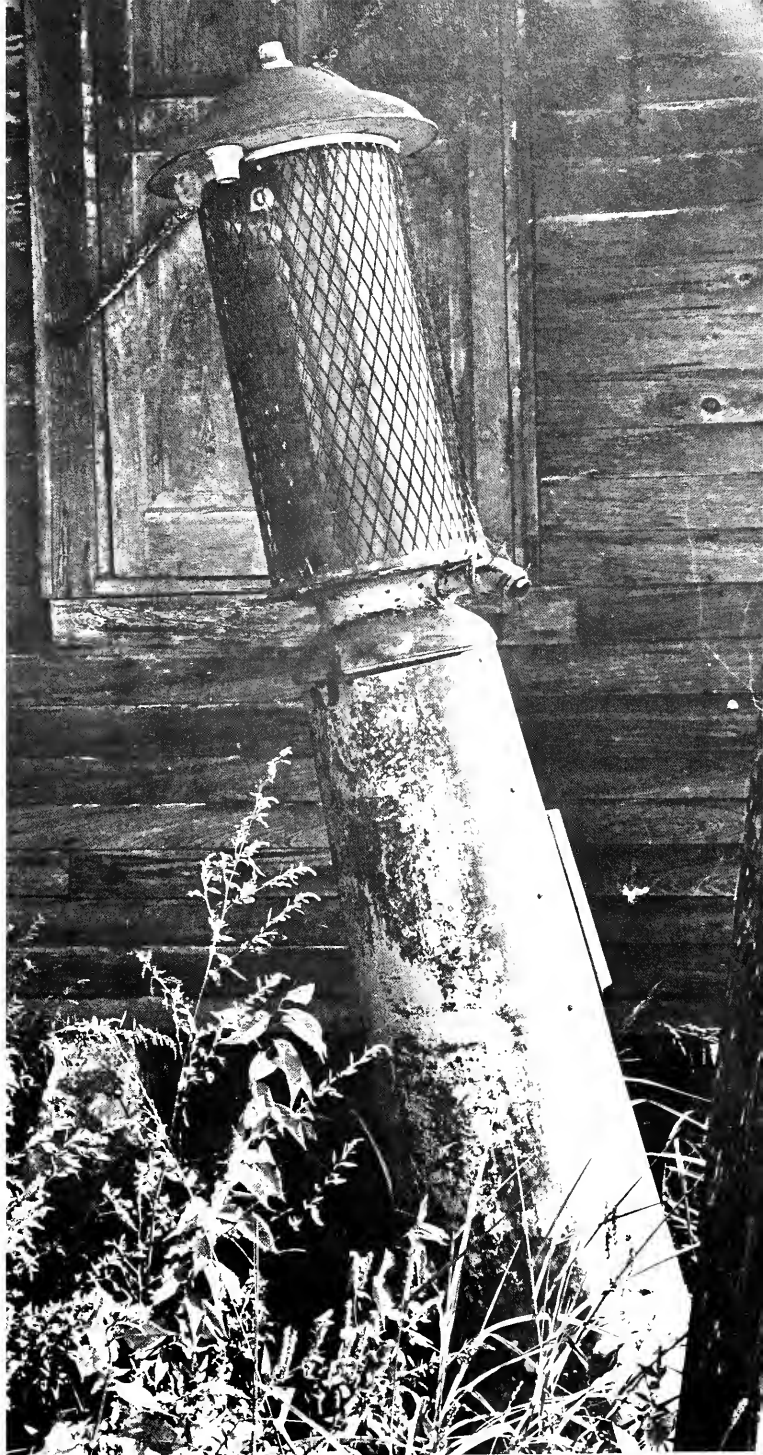
accommodate this popular occasion. Youngsters of all ages would arrive in town early in the evening, returning home only after a long night of dancing and breakfasting. The stars of the show were members of an extremely talented black band from Vicksburg called the “Red Tops,” headed by lead singer Rufus McKay. Rufus’ renditions of “Swanee River Rock” and “Danny Boy” will always live in the memories of those of us fortunate enough to have heard him perform.

The summer brought the Fourth of July Mule Races, which were run on a make-shift quarter mile track at the Country Club golf course. Planters from all over would enter the mules in the half-dozen or so preliminary races, and the winners would square off in the feature race at the close of the day. Two factors added to the excitement of the event. First, you could place bets on the mule or mules of your choice. Second, only the mules knew their intentions. More accustomed to pulling a plow than carrying the racing silks of a stable, those stubborn and unpredictable animals defied all efforts to develop sensible betting logic. Some could, and would, run very fast. Others took their good time loping around the course. And more than one never left the starting blocks, preferring to nibble on the green grass while their riders kicked and flailed away. I recall one mule starting off like a rocket and taking a lead of several lengths. Utilizing reasoning that only a mule would understand, he

screached to a halt just before the finishing line, politely letting the others go first before stepping across himself. The mechanization of farming and the subsequent decline of the mule population eventually led to the closing of this colorful chapter of Rosedale history.

There were several places in town that most folks felt it was necessary to visit at least once a day to make sure no tidbit of news slipped past them. One such place was Lewis' Drug Store, which was — and still is — located on the corner of Bruce and Main Streets, although most of us never knew that until they put up street signs sometime after I left. To us kids, there were several major attractions there. One was an "ole fashioned" soda fountain where cherry cokes, chocolate sodas, and such tempted the dimes we had in our pockets. Another was the magazine rack where you could plop down and read the comics (we called them funny books) for hours without buying them, and no one complained. Occasionally, we would actually purchase one of the "Classic" comics such as "A Tale of Two Cities" and read it for an English class book report, swearing to the teacher that we had waded through the real thing.

Another meeting place was Michael's Cafe (yes, Rosedale had one too). Farmers went there to predict the weather and join the townspeople for coffee and conversation. Michael's was the undisputed domain of Mrs. Eleanor



Johnson, a waitress there for many years. Mrs. Eleanor could lay claim to being the high school football team's number one fan, never missing a game and shouting encouragement louder than anyone else. On Friday afternoons, I would go to Michael's to order my pre-game hamburger. Inevitably, Mrs. Eleanor would bring me veal cutlets, steak or some more expensive dish than I had ordered. "I don't know why they can't ever get your order straight on the day of a football game," she would say and wink while charging me for a hamburger. Being the quarterback in a small town had its advantages.

The teen-agers of my era could usually be found hanging around a small Main Street cafe whose official name was James' Sandwich Shop, but which we referred to as "Jenny's." It was the unofficial teen center and the owners, Hank and Jenny James, kept the atmosphere wholesome. The jukebox usually featured the latest Rhythm and Blues song written by two area residents, Richard Henry and Tommy Courtney. At least two of their compositions, "Booted" and "Cork It Up And Go," achieved a measure of national success, quite an accomplishment for two white guys writing songs for an almost totally black audience.

Much of my youth and that of my friends was wasted at the Rosedale Pool Hall, into which we would sneak after "casing" the streets to make sure no parents were spying. The place reeked of beer, but the operator, a stiff-legged gentleman known only to me as "John Doe," made sure that none of the long-neck brown bottles wound up in the hands of us youngsters. It was a fascinating place, especially on those rare occasions when "Sonny Boy" LaPresto would ease his way in and work his cue stick magic against an out-of-towner who had more money than ability. The news that "Sonny Boy" was in the pool hall would spread to Jenny's and other hang-outs like wildfire, and it took only a minute for us kids to show up and root for the hometown hero. I never remember his losing, and we all grew up wanting to shoot pool like "Sonny Boy," leaving many quarters on the table in our futile efforts to do so.

Rosedale owns a bit of history in the telephone industry, having the distinction of being the last town in the South Central Bell system to switch to the dial system. Most towns welcomed the dial, but as we pointed out earlier, Rosedale enjoyed doing things its own way. Its way was a town switchboard which was manned 24 hours a day by operators. You picked up the receiver, a friendly voice on the other end inquired, "Number Please?," and you told her something like "7" for the drug store or "1-4-5" for the lumber yard. Or if you didn't have a head for numbers, you just told her you wanted to talk to your mama or somebody and she would make the right connection. There were two main reasons Rosedale clung to the switchboard, which incidentally is now on display in the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson. The first reason was economic because a half-dozen operators would be put out of work by automation. The second was that the operator system was vastly superior to the new fangled method in every respect. In fact, we had "call forwarding" before anyone even knew what it was. For example, if you were going to visit a neighbor, you simply told the operator and she would ring their number instead of yours. And if you called someone and they did not answer at home, the operator usually had some ideas about where they might be at that particular time of the day and would try a few of those locations for you before calling back. Try getting that kind of service out of today's computerized voice recordings!

Rosedale was different from many other small towns of that era in that it had a traffic problem. Her name was Mrs. Mae Wagnon. Owner of the oldest and one of the largest cars in town, Mrs. Wagnon drove where she pleased, either on or off the road. Street-wise locals would literally pull over and stop to give her clear sailing.

No mention of Rosedale would be complete without a reference to perhaps the town's most legendary figure, moonshiner Perry Martin. Mr. Martin gained a reputation during prohibition and afterward for making the finest whiskey in the country. I'm told you could buy it

by name in bars throughout the country and a bottle of PM was a prized possession as well as a conversation piece. It is more than a rumor that the Mississippi Highway Patrol Headquarters would dispatch cars to Rosedale to pick up some of Mr. Martin's illegal elixir to spice up such formal occasions as gubernatorial inauguration parties. Mr. Martin was known for more than his whiskey; he was also famous as a man you didn't want to mess with. Legend has it that more than one meddler lost his life by interfering in the old man's business. Operating from a houseboat behind the levee, Mr. Martin made infrequent visits to town. And those who hunted game in the woods near his territory made sure they kept their distance as well. Despite the legend, most people in Rosedale knew Perry Martin as a kindly man who minded his own business, would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it, and provided a national public service at the time it was needed most desperately. The revenuers never bothered Martin for two reasons: They were either afraid of him or they had orders from higher up not to tinker with a man who had friends and customers at the top level of government.

Nearly as famous and almost as potent as Martin's moonshine was another Rosedale product, Mrs. Antonio Graziosi's "Hot Stuff," a pepper sauce guaranteed to light a fire in anyone. Mrs. Graziosi, who was my grandmother, raised all the ingredients in her garden, cooked the sauce herself using a secret recipe kept only in her head, and handled mail orders from as far away as Michigan and Texas. Through the years, she resisted attractive financial offers to commercialize and expand her operation, preferring in the spirit of a true Rosedalian to continuing doing it her way. Incidentally, the sauce is still made Mrs. Graziosi's way by her daughter and son-in-law, Tina and Burl Dykes of Rosedale.

Rosedale was also the home of the state's most politically powerful individual, the late Walter Sillers, who served 50 years in the Mississippi House of Representatives, including 25 as Speaker of the House. No politician

Mrs. Grazioli: her hot  
pepper sauce became a  
staple in Delta kitchens.





Above: Mrs. Mae Wagnon with her famous car in the garage. Below: A popular snowball stand from days past.



before or since Mr. Sillers, including the state's governors, wielded the clout of the gentleman from Rosedale. His stately image was enhanced by courtly manners, a large, two-story white house with manicured grounds, and a Cadillac driven by his uniformed chauffeur Robert. Mr. Sillers was the main reason Rosedale could get away with doing things its own way, as the telephone company folks found out every time they tried to take away our switchboard.

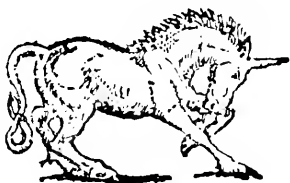
Fires were also big social events in Rosedale since just about everybody in town answered the alarm, either as volunteer firefighters or sightseers. No one ever had to ask where the fire was, you simply looked over the horizon

and headed for the smoke signals. Often, you could beat the truck there. Before improvements were made, Rosedale owned a temperamental ole fire truck that didn't always start. I remember an English teacher remarking caustically that the truck driver reminded her of Nero, cranking away while Rosedale burned. That situation was remedied sometime during the 1950s when some men of the town revitalized the department and made it the efficient fire and ambulance service it is today.

Friday nights during the fall were always big events because that was the night the maroon and white clad Bulldogs (Obviously, there was a Mississippi State grad in charge when the colors and mascots were selected) took the gridiron. Every able-bodied male of age was expected to play football in Rosedale and few had the courage to resist the social pressure. Rosedale took football seriously, and the town was full of unofficial coaches who were ready to evaluate your performance in the last game. Fortunately, like the Rosedale teams of today, we seldom lost. In fact, we usually won by large margins, a situation that proved quite profitable for one town resident who was fond of making large bets on the 'Dogs. Seems this gentleman would find someone in each of the towns we played and take advantage of the poor sucker's local pride. For sake of example, let's say he spotted the other team 30 points and bet \$500 on Rosedale. If the fourth quarter rolled around and the Bulldogs were up by less than 30, he would get uneasy and call one of the players to the sideline to explain his dilemma. The player would then go to Coach Bill Shirley and say, "Mr. — has got \$500 riding on the game and he needs us to win by 30." The team would then get busy and drive the victory margin above 30 points to secure the bet. The betting benefactor did not forget services rendered and personally paid for one of the nicest season-ending banquets the squad ever enjoyed. Today, they'd call that fixing games; we simply viewed it as doing our part to help the local economy.

*Continued on page 24*

# Weaver as Artist



by Marion Barnwell

Ensnared at her spinning wheel, Penelope Powell moves one hand steadily away from the spindle while the other turns the drive wheel. Her Canadian custom-made spinning wheel was designed and handcrafted by a friend and stained to match her auburn hair. It bears the date 1977, the year she began what was to become a passionate pursuit of the ancient art of weaving.

Penelope. The associations gather. Praised by Homer for her patience and endurance during Odysseus' nineteen-year absence, Penelope entertained herself with weaving by day and held off her anxious suitors by unraveling at night.

How did this Penelope from

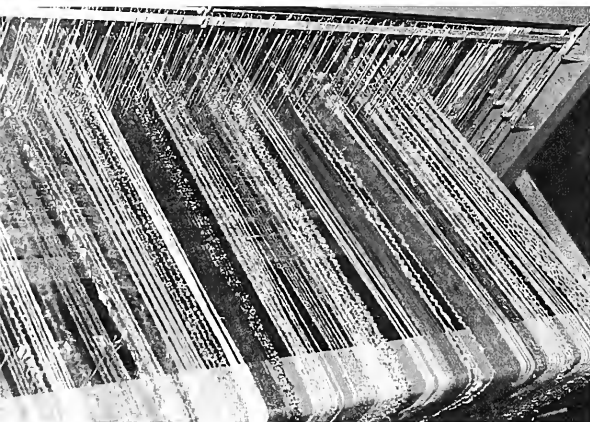
Indianola, Mississippi come to be mystically linked to her ancient Greek predecessor by craft as well as name? Where did it begin?

"I never played with my dolls as a child except to dress them in clothes I dyed myself," Ms. Powell (whom friends call "Penny") tentatively explained. "I preferred to play with cats. I also tried to dye mudpies, but it wasn't successful."

She graduated from mudpies to school and then to Arrowmont College in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, before returning home to study weaving under Lallah Perry at Delta State. It wasn't long before the childhood predilection for dyes and textiles manifested itself in colorful shawls and table runners made for an increasing number of customers.

The whimsy and daring fortuitously displayed in the mudpie attempt are qualities integral to her work. A ribbon, for instance, suddenly surfacing after row upon row of yarn is characteristic of her style. And yet Ms. Powell claims modestly that her work is strictly utilitarian. "You can wrap up in it and stay warm," she said with a smile. "My first piece was a blue and purple cotton shawl for my mother."

The house she lives in fairly bursts with her unassuming energy. Called "the old Sims place," this country home has been her residence for the past fourteen years. Fences laden with honeysuckle vines surround the place and contain two spirited Palomino horses. The house itself is



Photos by Claiborne Barnwell

*Left: This weaver achieves her purity of colors by making her own dyes from such plants as elderberries, coreopsis, and doc. Below: Ms. Powell working at her loom. Notice the yarns and handmade quilts behind her.*



and pieces of color that will go into the making by a friend of some future quilt.

"What's this?" I asked, holding up a corner of lacy cotton hanging on the wall beside her bed.

"Oh, my grandmother's drawers, of course."

Just as her home reflects an ordered chaos, so goes her life: Her love of animals lured her into working for awhile as a veterinarian's assistant. Her first job as a weaver was at Florewood Plantation where she demonstrated

almost hidden by a wide screen porch covered in ivy.

Once inside, one is challenged to think about space and design in new terms, the challenge the artist always makes. Ordinary furniture has been removed in favor of looms, spinning wheels and cabinets of yarn, the necessities of the craft of weaving. On a first visit the guest is mesmerized by a profusion of hangings, throws, quilts, Oriental rugs, piles of yarn, and homemade rattan chairs — all of which bombard the tactile senses. A multitude of earth colors and muted pastels greet and please the eye.

Other surprises await. The dining room is no dining room but decked out instead with more looms, spinning wheels, yarns, and cats. Cats? Several cats. What a heaven the cats must think they've gone to in this roomful of yarn. And what this Penelope doesn't unravel by night, the cats attempt to make up for. "Don't you get mad at the cats?" I asked. "Furious" was the answer, enigmatic perhaps to a practical-minded person.

Her house is not only testimony to the artist's temperament, but it is also full of stories. A table runner draped over the breakfront in the "dining room" has an unusual ribbon seam down the middle. It has been sewn back together

because it was once used as a rope by robbers to hoist a television set up through a hole in the roof of a local gift shop. Ms. Powell affectionately calls it "The Victim." "All going to prove my pieces are strong enough, I guess," she laughed.

Other items in her home reflect other histories and ties. A spinning chair from Scotland attests to her love for the Powell's native land. In fact, Scotland is a noticeable influence in her work. Stacks of yarn from Scotland indicate her weakness for tweed. She showed me a beloved family heirloom, a footstool that demonstrates the beauty of the Scottish tweed technique, a process which involves the use of cards for combing the raw material. This method is popular with Ms. Powell because it produces irregular strands of yarn that could never be duplicated by a machine or computer. "I've spun everything," she declared. "The dog's hair, the horses' hair, even my own hair."

She led me down a hall.

"I can't imagine a life without quilts," she said, smoothing the colors pieced together on her high oak bed. No, she doesn't make the multitude of quilts one finds draped casually over chairs or hanging above the daybed. But she does collect the materials, all the bits



weaving and spinning before the public for long hours at a stretch. Presently she is employed as an activity therapist at the Delta Community Mental Health Region V in Cleveland. She teaches needlework and woodwork as well as weaving. She admits that the work is hard and the needs of the patients are great. When asked what is most needed, she quickly answered, "We need more floor looms."

One of her first projects at the Mental Health Center was teaching the patients to make grapevine wreaths. For this unique effort, she was commended by her director. "As with all of us," she said, "the patients are often afraid to try something new but most gratified when they do." One of her latest projects is making gorgeous pastel rag rugs out of socks with the children in her group. "The children are amazed that we can produce something so pretty from ordinary socks," said Ms. Powell.

Her handmade items are in demand and becoming more so all the time. She currently has three of her looms in progress. Her work has place in several arts and crafts shows in Yazoo City, Greenwood, Jackson, and at Crosstie. Recently, while waiting in my dentist's office, I was happily distracted by an attractive square of raw wool and silk framed in plexiglass which was "Handwoven by Penelope." Another swatch was framed by Duncan and Terry Baird for a handwork show at their shop, "The Framemaker." Several of her runners and shawls were displayed last summer in Monteagle, Tennessee, along with the pottery of Lee and Pup McCarty of Merigold.

"But the highpoint of my year," she emphasized, "was to be asked to demonstrate at the Mississippi Pavilion at the World's Fair." Last September in New Orleans she spun her shawls and runners for six or seven hours a day. Those long hours



Above: A colorful array of yarns to choose from if the cats don't get to them first.

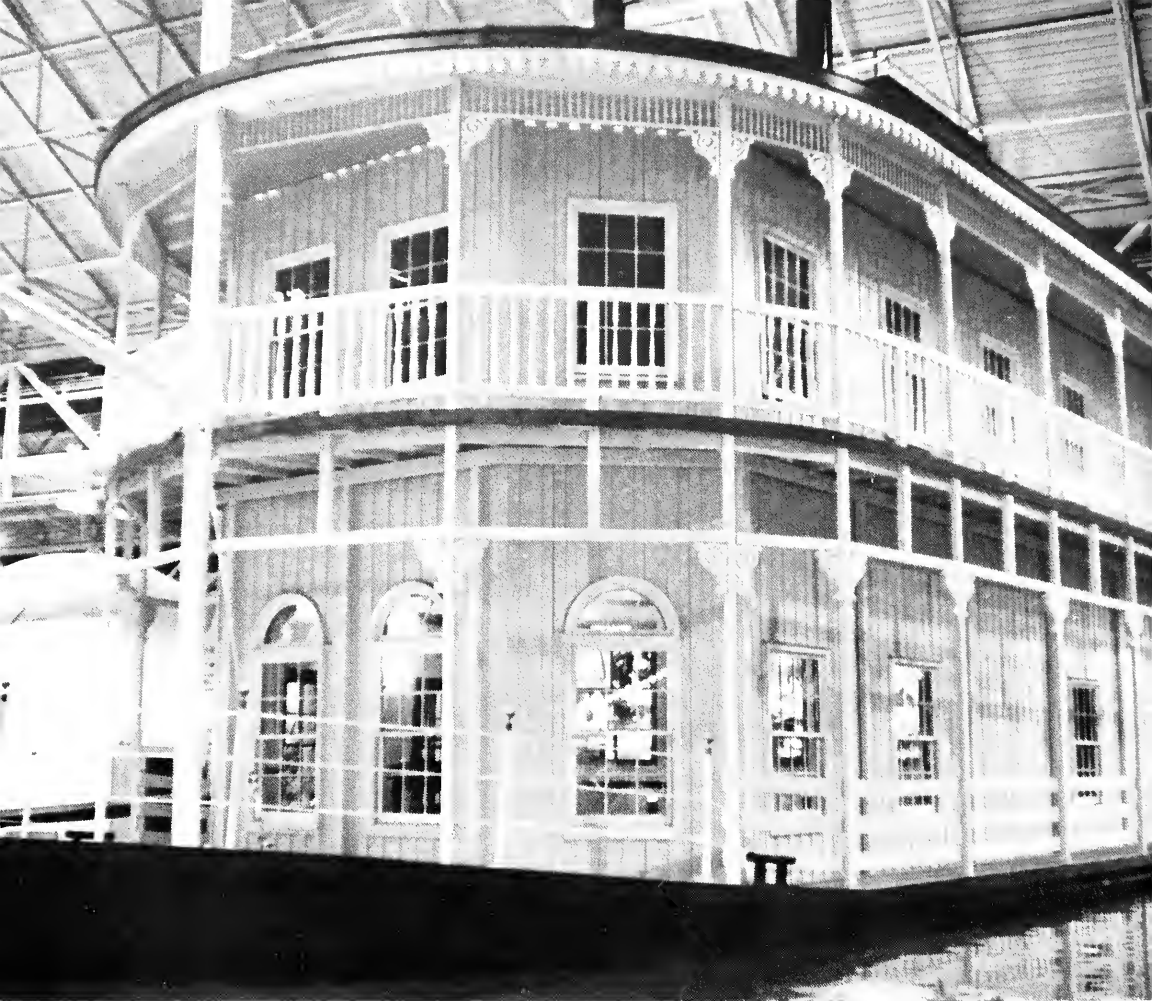
Above Right: Handcrafted spinning wheel made especially for Ms. Powell with the date 1977, the year she began weaving, engraved on brass inset.

at Florewood Plantation paid off in preparing her for the Herculean (Penelopean?) task at the Fair.

"I sure was impressed by our Mississippi Pavilion," she told me. "Especially the computerized film. But my favorite display was the textile exhibit at the Vatican Pavilion. The natural dyes have lasted since the Eighth and Ninth centuries."

Ms. Powell has reason to be fascinated by those dyes. Perhaps the greatest strength of her work is the purity of color which she achieves by making her own dyes. When pressed to tell her secrets, she generously offered that for her yellows she uses mimosa leaves and goldenrod. For her distinctive celery color she uses mistletoe. The greens are produced from doc; the red hues from coreopsis; for blues, elderberries; and for orange, eucalyptus. Her knowledge of dyes is derived from extensive reading and a lot of trial and error, the stuff of which more discoveries are sometimes made. "I have discovered a dyeing process using

*Continued on page 26*



*The River Road Queen in place at the  
Louisiana World Exposition in  
New Orleans.*

*Photo by Chris Ryan*

# The Queen's Progress

in the interest of preservation.

Two years ago, Judy Stough, chairman of the International Great River Road Association World's Fair Committee and director of the Arkansas Great River Road Association, discovered that New Orleans was to hold an exposition whose theme was "The World of Rivers," and she recognized a unique opportunity for all the Mississippi River states and provinces.

"The location and the theme were perfect for us," she said. "I couldn't see passing up the chance to get our message out. We needed an exhibit at the World Exposition."

Stough learned that Greenville, Mississippi had a small River Road welcome center but that the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce had for several years been working to acquire funds for a new full-size facility.

Stough paid a visit to the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce and to the Mississippi chapter of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. If she could get a moveable visitor center built, she told the two organizations, she could have an exhibit at the exposition that would later serve as a permanent promotional tool in Greenville. Her idea intrigued both the Mississippi chapter of the Parkway Commission and the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce.

Stough, Bob Robinson of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, and the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce then approached Sam Waggoner, Bob Joiner, and other members of the Mississippi State Highway Commission who approved use of federal Great River Road funds for the project. These funds were matched by money from the Mississippi Department of Economic Development and the Washington County Board of Supervisors. The City of Greenville approved use of city land for the visitor center and agreed to administer the project. Then it was a matter of obtaining enough money to pay for the people and space at the World Exposition. The government money could only be used in Greenville.

Stough still had a great deal of

work to do; in order to get the exhibit to the World Exposition and staff it, she needed \$300,000. To get the money, she set out on a 10-month quest through nine states and one province that included a long series of speeches and, in some cases, efforts to convince state legislators to introduce special legislation. Stough succeeded in raising the \$300,000. But one problem remained.

"We were going to build the River Road Queen in Greenville, barge it down to New Orleans, and then barge it back to Greenville," she said. "Unfortunately, the doors in the Great Hall, where the boat would be located, were too small. We couldn't get it in and out."

Fortunately, the potential exhibitors discovered the problem before the River Road Queen was constructed. They searched for a way to solve the unexpected dilemma.

"We looked for a while, and then we talked to John Ventura in Greenville. He had the solution." Stough said.

Ventura, it seems, is a Butler Builder. His company, Ventura, Inc., designs and builds pre-engineered metal building systems produced by Butler Manufacturing Company.

"We had to have a building that could be dismantled and rebuilt relatively easily and inexpensively," Stough said.

Ventura said that the exhibit required unique engineering solutions. As an exhibit in New Orleans, the boat would rest on the floor of the Great Hall. It could have no anchor bolts and could exert a floor load of 350 pounds per square foot. In Greenville, however, it was to be subject to normal live loads and would have anchor bolts and a foundation. Butler's engineering staff, in a matter of two weeks, designed and provided engineering drawings for the twenty-five ton structure that also included a five ton paddle wheel and twenty-six-foot smoke stacks that gave the structure a total height of fifty-two feet.

Ventura-Stowe, the engineering and architectural firm that designed the exhibit, then coordinated the

by Chris Ryan

Back in 1938, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission was formed to preserve the history and beauty of North America's greatest waterway. Appointed by the governments of the American states and Canadian provinces directly affected by the river, the 120 members of the commission have overseen the maintenance of highways, parks, and visitor centers along the entire route of the "Great River Road."

It has been a big job, so big that the commission has sought help from private citizens who have joined the commission-sponsored Great River Road Association, an open-membership organization with chapters in each Mississippi River state and province. The association, which currently has about 600 members, supports the commission by publicizing the value of preserving the River Road and its colorful legacy.

The story of the River Road Queen, a 110-foot replica of a sternwheeler, which was on display in the Great Hall at the Louisiana World Exposition in New Orleans, is a chronicle of one Great River Road Association member's dedication and of her ability to spark innovation and cooperation

*Continued on page 30*



## Delta Christmas Remembered

by Van Henderson

**Christmas.**

*Hurried. Commercial.*

*East Tennesseans' taillights trailing red-and-yellow blurs across hills, up mountainsides and along the river as shoppers hurry to beat the rush.*

**Christmas.**

*Cold. Nostalgic.*

*Rabbit's ears poised motionless like frozen brown twigs against the cotton-white horizon of winter. Steam wafting up against the plastic draped around the screen of the back porch as Mama Rainey's custard pots hang from the rafters to cool. Black rubber buckle boots (presents from Uncle James) crunching the snow as three towheads try to keep stride across the pasture with their Daddy and Big Daddy.*

**Christmas.**

*Warm. Reflective.*

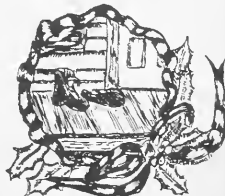
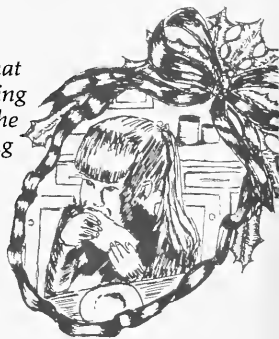
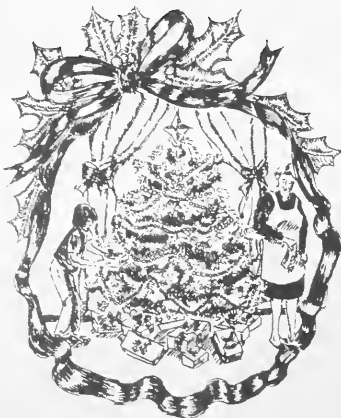
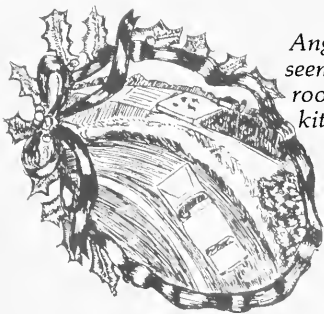
*Angel's hair being hung on a star-topped cedar tree by what seemed like dozens of cousins darting in and out of the living room, 'round the "stove that burns bricks" and through the kitchen where Big Mama's oven leaks the mouth-watering aroma of peanut butter cake.*

**Christmas remembered.**

*My dad.*

*Our family.*

*The Delta.*



Artwork by Theresa Russell

Van Henderson is a native of Drew, MS. He received his education at Lee College in Cleveland, TN, and presently works for Chatanooga News-Free Press.

## The Deer Creek Floats Leland, Mississippi

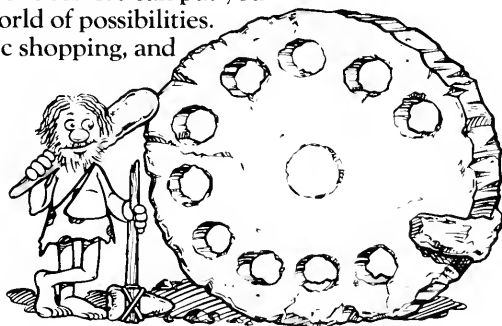
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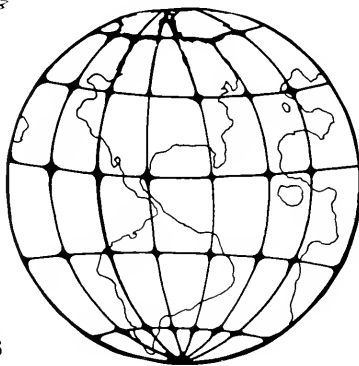
Things progressed flawlessly up until the Monday before the wedding, when a few of Martin's friends got together and gave him a small but oh-so elegant party at the club. Lisa put in appearance as the blushing bride-to-be and stayed long enough to have one glass of wine, receive everyone's congratulations, and generally just sit at the table and look ravishing (an act which she had perfected to an art). She left early, and the party got stronger in direct proportion to the drinks as the night wore on. By two a.m., everyone was in "extremely high spirits," as the paper would later delicately say in order to avoid any hint of drunken debauchery that might have otherwise been inferred. Everyone piled into Martin's little white Mercedes with the least inebriated at the wheel, lurched off to deposit the sotted lot at their various accommodations, and shortly after leaving the club veered into the oncoming lane of traffic and neatly killed two of the passengers and injured the other three. Incredibly, Martin was one of the passengers killed.

A nauseating chill wrapped around me as I read the account in the paper. I forgot that this was a girl who could have probably bought another husband by Saturday and have him put on her charge card with no trouble at all. Images in my mind took on a sense of the macabre as I thought of the \$6,000 wedding gown hanging somewhere, all the wedding gifts that had to be returned (and after writing all those thank-you notes! I couldn't help but moan inwardly, nursing my own writer's cramp) and the 800 guests that had to be notified by phone since it was far too late to have wedding cancellation announcements printed up, addressed and mailed out. Even on the day of my wedding when I should have been preoccupied with the well-being of things, Lisa still crept into my mind. I don't know why I was so concerned with the well-being of someone I'd barely spoken to in ten years, but hardly a day went by after the accident that I didn't think of her and wonder how she was doing.

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One day I came home from work to find the newspaper lying on the dining table and turned to the society page, where a picture of a chic, glowing creature caught my eye. "What's this?" I asked my husband as I dropped my armload where I stood and grabbed the paper, instantly recognizing the creature as none other than Lisa.

"Oh, that? Thought you might be interested in it," he barely looked up from the sports section, obviously unconcerned.

I scanned the article for mention of her name, then shrieked in disbelief at what I read. "Pemberton Rush and his date for the evening, the vivacious and ever beautiful Lisa-Darnell, were guests of the Bill Davises last night at the Memphis Symphony and attended the poolside party afterward at the Davises' lovely Germantown residence. They looked ever the radiant couple and have been a constant twosome since working on the grand opening festivities for Mud Island last summer." Last summer! Even stretching the definition of "summer" would have put their fateful coupling a mere three months after her would-have-been wedding! I sat down hard, still staring at the picture in disbelief. Poor Lisa, poor little heart-shattered Lisa whom I'd mourned for all this time, coolly and with a calculating eye picking out another suitable escort from another respectable family before her wedding dress even had time to wrinkle.

I threw the paper down in disgust and gathered the books I'd tossed aside earlier. "She's got to keep up appearances, you know," my husband said idly from behind his paper, hearing my exclamations. "All that money has to stay in the right family."

"I guess you're right," I said absently as I folded the paper and took it to the trash can. And I never worried about Lisa again.

---

*Phyllis Frazier Boatman is a native of Cleveland, MS., and received her B.A. in English from Delta State. While an undergraduate, she served as editor of Confidante, the D.S.U. student literary magazine. She presently works in the Home Economics Department at Delta State University.*

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I cannot overlook a lady of class and beauty who had an impact on the lives of more Rosedalians than anyone else I knew. Her name was Mrs. Rae Wolfe, and she taught second grade at Rosedale for something like a half century. Mrs. Rae, as everyone called her, was as close to a saint as anyone could come. A master teacher, she always found ways to inspire us to do our best. I remember her famed "Apple Tree," a posterboard creation containing several limbs. To climb a

limb, you had to make a 100 on spelling, and each 100 would move the cardboard apple with your name on it closer to the top of the tree. But if you failed to make a 100, you fell to the ground and had to start all over again. My apple stayed bruised from such falls much of the time, but it occasionally made it to the top of the tree where Mrs. Rae awarded you with a real apple. No matter how poor a kid was, and Rosedale had its share of "have-nots," no one went hungry in second grade. I remember Mrs. Rae personally buying lunch for one youngster in the school cafeteria for

several years. Mrs. Rae practiced what she preached, and she preached the Golden Rule, always passing out Coca-Cola rulers with those frequently quoted words inscribed on them. They say she died peacefully in her sleep one night, with a smile of contentment on her face. I'm sure she did.

Snow days were special. Rosedale had the only hill in the Delta, compliments of the U.S. Corps of Engineers, and we'd head for the levee at the first opportunity, dragging store-bought and homemade sleds and toboggans. Bonfires of limbs from nearby woods warmed our days and lighted our nights, and we frolicked until the snow or our bodies were exhausted.

Other memories hurry through my mind. There was the day the town installed its first stop light, and we all went out to watch it change. And the time some kids put a mule in the school auditorium on Halloween night and the stench lingered for days. I remember a girls basketball team that went something like 11 years without winning a game but never quit

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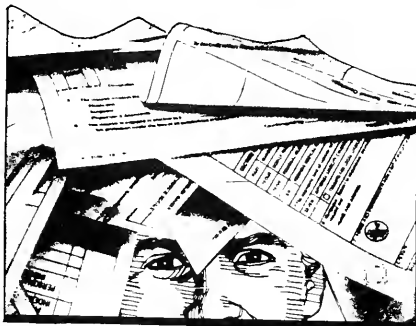


trying. There were Hook's hot tamales; the Farmers' Club where men went to play cards and plantations were rumored to have changed hands; Mr. Vaiden's unparalleled bird collection which is now in an Ole Miss museum; Bingo games with cash prizes on Wednesday nights at the Courthouse; the Talisman Theater where you went every time they changed the movie, which was four times a week; the unique Lobdell Scenic Studio where John V. Lobdell Jr. hand-painted giant stage scenery for theaters and auditoriums throughout the country, and many others.

Memories are endless, but space is limited. Time will continue to pass and Rosedale will continue to change despite my desire to keep it the way it was. But those of us who still love the ole river town will never submit to Thomas Wolfe's admonition that "you can't go home again." Remember, we like to do things our own way.

Leroy Morganti is serving as Director of the Public Information Office for Delta State University.

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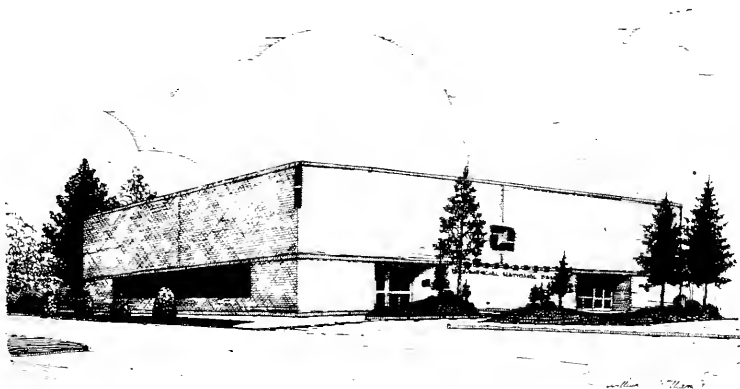
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Continued from page 17

the microwave that produces a variegated color," she said.

She has experimented with a vast array of materials as well: wool, cotton, linen, cashmere, alpaca, and silk. "Look at this silk yarn," she said, holding it up to the light. "If you look closely, you can see bits of the cocoon in some of the strands. And do you know what this is?" she asked, showing me a piece of brown fluff. "Brown cotton! The plant was first produced in Haiti. Now Cajun farmers in Louisiana are growing it, too." With effort, I began to see what in her imagination had already become a lovely shawl.

A visit in the home of Penelope Powell is an experience that brings consciousness that weaving is a serious art as well as one of the oldest crafts. What one experiences at a local level in the household of Ms. Powell is simultaneously being felt in the contemporary art world. Measuring at least forty feet long, the Miro tapestry hanging in the East Wing of the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. is perhaps the most dramatic proof of this renewed awareness of weaving as a serious art. Paradoxically, however, one should not have to look to the National Gallery for justification of an art with a history that goes back to the Seventh Century B.C. Our myths show us that weaving is a powerful psychic image associated with the Feminine in a mysterious and profound way. Ms. Powell made a strategically significant choice when she began to sign her work "Penelope." By so doing, she affirmed an important connection with her mythical counterparts.

The screen door banged lightly behind me when I left and set the vines to rustling. I was thinking about spiders and whoever it was who said that the spider is the most admirable insect because she spins her web out of nothing. I was thinking that, if undisturbed, the webs grow larger and larger.

---

Marion Barnwell received a B.A. degree in English from Newcomb College, Tulane University, a M.A. degree in English from Mississippi State. Her thesis was on Walker Percy. Barnwell is a resident of Indianola, MS, and is an English instructor at Delta State University.

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# Book Review

## Isaac and The Undertaker's Daughter: Found Treasure

by Rebecca Hood-Adams

You've just got to keep digging. Often when life seems as unyielding as a field of stones, you turn over a rock and there it is: found treasure. The delight of discovery adds to the prize. The stumbling and sweat of the search is forgotten and you are overcome by the magic of unexpected pleasure.

This summer's Writers-on-the-River Conference at Rhodes College in Memphis was just that kind of gem harvest. The effect was dazzling.

There was Howard Nemerov, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet. Silver-haired and sonorous, Nemerov **was** poetry. Words leapt like light across the room. Generous with his talents and open to his students, Nemerov embodied the American man of letters at his very finest. It was genuinely humbling to be privy to the workings of such an extraordinary mind. Some few, rare individuals have an enriching spirit which is contagious, an ability to envelop other lives and leave them **more** for the meeting. Howard Nemerov is such a man.

There was Shirley Abbott, author of **Womenfolk**, a marvelous book which looks at Southern women through the eyes of an Arkansas girl who came of age visiting cemeteries with elderly aunts and absorbing family history, spoon-fed with histrionics. Abbott's book speaks so clearly to Southern women that I'll devote an entire column to the work in an upcoming issue. She is worthy of special attention, and certainly her conference students received more than heaping measure from her. Shirley Abbott has a gift for instruction and came

to class prepared, willing to work, and open to dialogue.

The workshops were crammed with practical information. Marketing. Writing a query letter. Finding an agent. The bones and sinew which give structure to a writer's life.

Most impressive was the conference staff. Whatever your problem, Gordon Oving, Jim Gray, and Phyllis Tickle stood ready around the clock. Too often the management at literary workshops disappear the minute your check clears. This was not the case in Memphis.

As if all this bounty weren't enough, there was your stereotypical hard-drinking, demon-driven Southern novelist. Just in case you missed the Pope's visit to America, there was pontification a la grits and gin. "The trouble with Shakespeare is he's too damn garrulous! That's why I never re-read him — he's overwritten." My, my. Heady stuff for nine o'clock in the morning.

But the best quip of the conference came from the lips of a very young beginning writer: "What? You mean I can make more money writing screen plays than poetry!"

It was tremendous fun, and the networking among writers from across the country was professionally invaluable. Whether you're an aspiring author or simply a lover of books, save a space next summer on your calendar for the Writers-on-the-River Conference. It will be time well spent.

The real find of the conference was Steve Stern. Born in Memphis

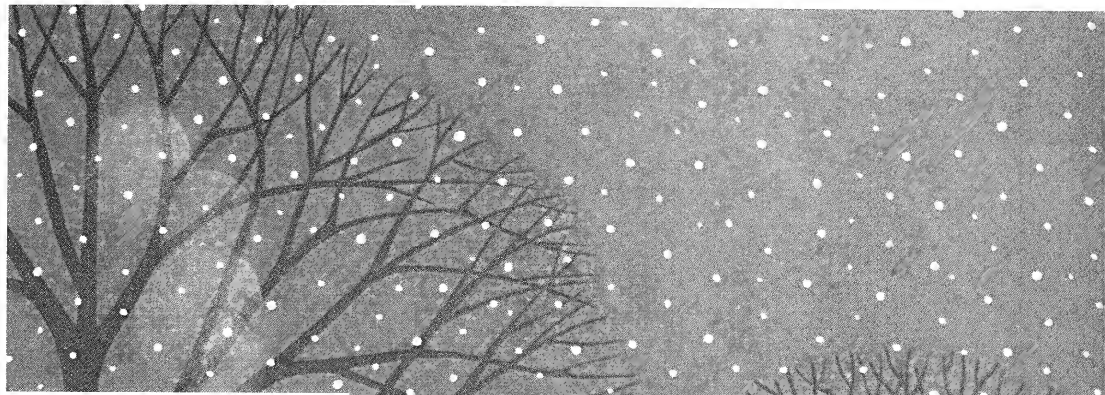
in 1947, Stern is the director of the Ethnic Heritage Project at the Center for Southern Folklore and a recipient of this year's writer-in-residence grant from the Tennessee Arts Commission, as well as the Commission's Individual Writer Fellowship. In 1981 "Isaac and the Undertaker's Daughter" was included in the O. Henry Prize anthology.

Steve Stern is found treasure. There's not a flake of fool's gold in the seven short stories in **Isaac and the Undertaker's Daughter** (Lost Roads, San Francisco). These tales of the Southern Jewish experience are gems, rich with colorful detail, and shimmering with life.

The stories abound with a gentle good humor, a loving whimsy. In "The Book of Mordecai," a seventy-nine year old uncle sets up shop in a cluttered corner of the living room and begins to structure his death by writing down his life, back-to-front. You'll laugh out loud at Uncle Mordecai, with his "mild and sunny disposition, simplified by the excision of numerous obsolete organs."

Mordecai's nephew watches his decay with a mixture of tenderness and trepidation:

"When I was eight or nine — and Uncle Mordecai had been with us for about two years — my canary passed away. A pale yellow bird that had never demonstrated any particular love of life, it toppled one day beak-first from its perch. Lying on its side beneath the cuttlebone, it maintained the precise pose which was its custom when erect. There was little distinction, I had concluded, between life and death



... This is how Uncle Mordecai, albeit deliberately, toppled beak-first into the past."

In the Uncle's remembrance of absurd moments, the befuddled nephew sees a blueprint for the future. Writing in reverse chronological order, Uncle Mordecai finally arrives at the moment of his birth. "That was how my uncle escaped into eternity where the fear was unable to follow him. He fell out of his armchair and lay in the garbage and books, his knees tucked up under his chin."

There is a special charm to Stern's work, an original voice. Classic in their construction and yet novel in their viewpoint, Stern's stories haunt the reader long after the collection is laid aside. Steve Stern deserves a large and appreciative audience. Truly, he is a diamond in the cleft of stone.

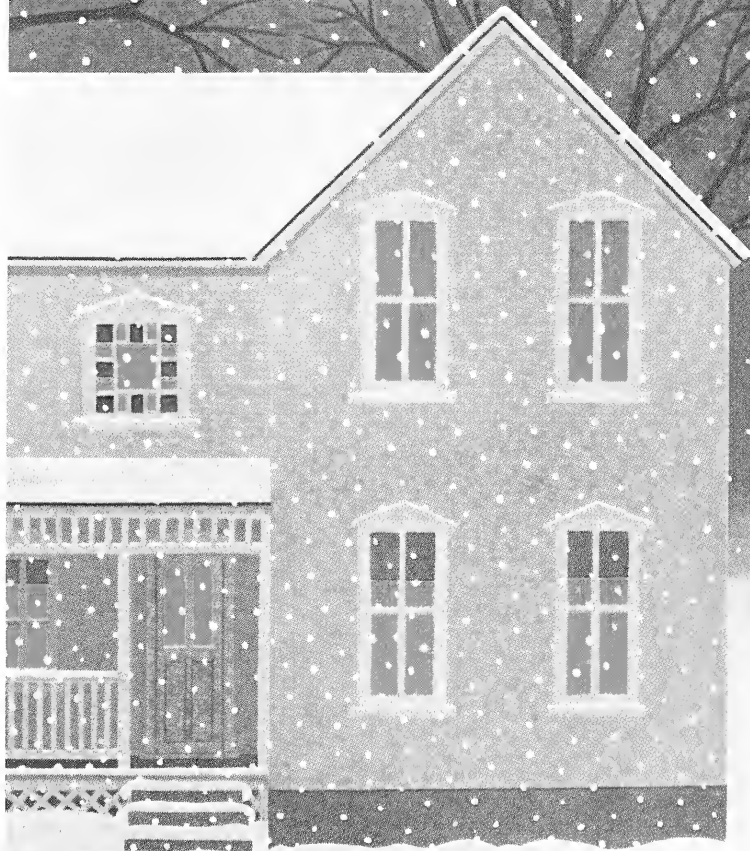
You have the map. Discover the treasure of Steve Stern's stories for yourself. They captivate.

**Footnote:** This column is being written from London where Ellen Gilchrist's **The Annunciation** (reviewed in this column a few issues ago) is being prominently displayed at better bookstores. Next issue I'll be reporting on New York agent Susan Protter's assessment of the market for Southern fiction. Meanswhile, keep turning over stones.

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*Rebecca Hood-Adams received her Master's degree in English from Delta State University and her B.A. in journalism from Memphis State University. Ms. Hood-Adams has had several articles published including her collection of verse, Biscuit Soppin' Blues.*

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project with the City of Greenville, the Great River Road Association, the Louisiana World Exposition, the City of New Orleans, the Mississippi State Highway Department, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Mississippi Department of Economic Development.

"It's pretty much a standard Butler building. It's just designed to look like a sternwheeler," said George Stowe, the architect on the project.

The River Road Queen is a Butler Landmark two-story building, a type of structure that is often used for office, manufacturing, warehouse and distribution facilities.

The Butler building was delivered to New Orleans on March 1, 1984, and the project was substantially complete on April 12, 1984. "Butler Manufacturing Company is to be highly complimented for the outstanding job it performed in designing and manufacturing this truly unique facility to meet the architectural, engineering, and time constraints of this project." Ventura said.

While on display at the Fair, the sternwheeler replica housed exhibits highlighting the Mississippi River states and provinces and a theatre that showed a film made especially for the World Exposition and donated by the Minnesota Fresh Water Society. The forward deck served as an entertainment area where programs were held to showcase each state and province.

Thanks to Judy Stough, John Ventura, the City of Greenville and the Louisiana World Exposition, which attracted visitors from around the globe, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Great River Road Association have gained a new tool that promises to increase support for their efforts. This summer, the River Road Queen was enthroned in the Great Hall on the grounds of the World Exposition. But when the festivities are over this autumn, the boat will be dismantled and moved to Greenville, where it will be used as a tourist information center. It will serve then, as it does now, to promote the River Road through exhibits and films. ■

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